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ABSTRACT

Research indicates the importance of the relationship between music, adult/child interaction, language practice, rhythm, repetition, familiarity of content, and story time, and a child's oral language development. Folk songs that have been illustrated and put into book form--"stories that sing"--can be used by parents and teachers to assist children in developing their oral language as they move from egocentric to socialized speech. Folktales adapt well to a variety of oral activities, and music increases listening skills and is a highly enjoyable mode for oral participation. A folktale sung to a child can be followed with open-ended questions that stimulate creative language and thought. Allowing children to find a rhyming word or substitutes for a noun or verb in part of a song is a good structured language practice, and children enjoy anticipating the script of a familiar tale. Audiovisual activities can also be used with "stories that sing." Pantomime and dramatization are activities that allow children creative participation in a story. Parents and teachers should also use their own creative energies to further develop "stories that sing" with children. (Additional titles of "stories that sing" are appended.) (HTH)

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Stories That Sing: Stimulating Oral Language in Young Children

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Piaget has described how the child moves from egocentric to socialized speech in his book, The Language and Thought of the Child (1971). During the development of egocentric speech, it is evident how in the first years of life a child loves to repeat words and imitate syllables and sounds. From this point the child moves to the category of "monologue" whereby he talks to himself as though he were thinking aloud. The last category within egocentric speech is the "dual or collective monologue" in which the "...point of view of the other person is never taken into account; his presence serves only as a stimulus" (Piaget, 1971, p. 9).

Ellis (1975) sought to validate the concepts of egocentric and socialized speech as discussed by Piaget, and did so by asking preschoolers to retell a story. It was found that although the preschoolers appeared to listen attentively to the story told, the retellings indicated an incorrect ordering of events, faulty use of pronouns, a tendency to omit important features, and a poor understanding of cause and effect. It was concluded that most of the preschoolers, who were at the preoperational stage of development exhibited the egocentric speech patterns that Piaget discovered in his clinical research with children.

Beyond egocentric speech, it is possible to distinguish socialized speech. According to Piaget, a category within socialized speech is "adapted information" and is defined as when "...the child really exchanges his thoughts with others, either by telling his hearer something that will interest him and influence his actions, or by an actual interchange of

ideas by argument or even by collaboration in pursuit of a common aim" (Piaget, 1971, pp. 9-10). In the study mentioned above by Ellis (1978), a few of the preschoolers who were found to be in the advanced phase of the preoperational developmental stage as described by Piaget, exhibited socialized speech in their retellings of the story. These youngsters were able to present the story in proper sequence, they used pronouns correctly, they included important features in their story retellings, and they could better explain cause and effect within the story.

It is the purpose of this paper to examine some of the research related to oral language development, particularly that which focuses on literature and music. Sources reviewed point out the important relationship between music, adult-child interaction, language practice, rhythm, repetition, familiarity of content, story time, and oral language development. In utilizing music via "Stories That Sing" (folk songs which have been illustrated and put into book form) it is hoped that the parent and teacher will become acquainted with a technique that should assist children in their oral language as they move from egocentric to socialized speech.

Music is a happy experience for most children and appears to enhance oral language development. From the moment of birth, a mother who sings to her newborn is helping to foster the attention needed for later speech development. It has been reported that after the fourth month of pregnancy parents already have a child who hears them when they sing (Lind and Hardgrove, 1978). When a mother sings, the infant attends to the sounds and rhythms of the mother's voice. One may ask if recorded music can accomplish the same task. Apparently not, according to Lind and Hardgrove (1978) who claim that the mother's song develops in a very important way. In addition to enhancing

later speech development the mother's singing creates a joyous interaction between parent and child. This creates a bond, which is important because in order for communication between the child and parent to develop, the child must want to communicate. In singing, not only does the parent reinforce the child wanting to communicate, but the child reinforces the parent wanting to communicate by smiling, making sounds, and moving to the parent's music. Lind and Hardgrove (1978) write that "singing and rocking comforts and connects adults and child" (p. 10).

Early in life the development of a listening attitude is helped by singing to an infant. Lind and Hardgrove (1978) quote Piaget, "The more a child has seen and heard, the more he wants to see and hear" (p. 36). Piaget's theory views the child as a discoverer, an active, not passive learner, one who constructs his knowledge from what he sees and hears. The development of cognition requires the discovery of symbolic function. Corcoran (1976) writes:

> When the music of language which occurs in poetic utterances can be related to the language of music, the child can move from listening and singing into discovering the symbolic nature of music and language. He then is ready to discover the expressive relationship that exists between reading and writing music and reading and writing language (p. 141).

In Language Experience for Nursery and Kindergarten Corcoran (1976) explains that both the composer and the author symbolize their ideas by written symbols and the child, as either singer or reader, interprets these ideas "through use of the voice or body movement in pantomime or acting" (p. 141). She concludes:

> Thus the music of language and the language of music have a great deal in common. Because there is much evidence that a child responds to music with pleasure, the wise adult will utilize every possible relationship between music and language in guiding the development of the child (p. 141).

Oral Language Development and the Classroom

The field of psycholinguistics has provided us with a valid theoretical framework of how a child acquires language. Children have the ability to take language from their linguistic environment and process this language to discover regularities and induce generalizations about their language system (Rebelsky and Dorman, 1970; Smith, 1972). Once children have learned the basic rules, they must have opportunities to "process", or "play with", or "practice" language in the classroom in order for their oral language to develop.

In an article by Fox (1976), the importance of oral language practice in the classroom is highlighted. Research reveals the significance of an infant's oral practice before falling asleep. Additional research reveals that oral language appears to mature when it is used in the interaction of ideas with others, and that such interaction comes about most readily through sociodramatic play. The author goes on to explain that ... "as more make-believe occurs, more ideas in speech must be expressed" (Fox, 1976, p. 657). Piaget has written about how a child's interaction with children who differ in opinions from the child's own, and the child's interaction with other children in assuming roles of adults, forces the child to accommodate and become less egocentric in her thinking. These oral experiences not only enhance the child's language growth, but the child's cognitive growth (Piaget, 1971).

The research of Cullinan, Jaggar, and Strickland (1973) supports the importance of children's oral language practice. The researchers planned a program that would expand the language of Black children to include standard English. A literature-based oral language program was set up in

kindergartens through third grades. The participating teachers were trained in ways to present literature to children and actively involve children in using language in two ways: (1) creatively, through spontaneous use and (2) structured, giving practice in specific grammatical structures. The control group also had a literature program with many enrichment activities, except oral language activities, following books which were read aloud.

Though gains were made at every grade level compared to the control group, the most significant gains were made with the kindergartners. Their language development scores almost doubled after a year's participation in the project. Practice, and a rich linguistic environment are a strong influence on children's oral language, especially the younger child.

In the same article by Fox (1976) research regarding the influence of reading to children was presented. In a study by Cohen (1968) the experimental group participated in a program of story reading combined with a variety of story related activities such as discussion, dramatization, children's own illustrations, constructions, and field trips. Another group served as a control and it was learned that children in the experimental group who had the literature-based program with the oral language follow-up, when compared to the control group, made "...highly significant gains in vocabulary, word recognition, and reading comprehension (p. 668).

Fox (1976) emphatically states, "The combined evidence of Cohen's and Strickland's research provides a strong impetus to bring literature to children as an aid to language growth" (p. 668). Further support for the use of literature with children is found in a report completed by Chomsky

(1972) who concluded that after finding a positive relation between a child's linguistic stage and the child's score on a literary background inventory, "exposure to the more complex language available from reading seem to go hand in hand with increased knowledge of the language" (p. 668).

The Value of "Books That Sing"

Specifically, what do illustrated folk songs have to offer to teacher and child? Research has revealed that reading books aloud to children in conjunction with opportunities for oral participation, both structured and creative, contributes to a child's oral language development. Folk songs adapt well to a variety of oral activities. Research has also shown how music increases listening skills and is a highly enjoyable mode for oral participation.

Taken together, music combined with a book attracts children like a magnet. The songs have the rhythm and repetition that naturally draw the child's attention and encourages participation. Not only do the books stimulate oral language in general by contributing to language experience and including new ideas and new words, well written folk songs that have sentence repetition and sentence expansion help promote facility with different grammatical forms - a specific oral language experience.

Folk songs, by nature, have a history to pass from one generation to the next. A child is sung a traditional song as an infant, later learns to enjoy the song in written and illustrated form, and still later as a parent and grandparent, sings the song to his or her children. These songs survive the test of time.

In addition to particular sentence patterns and the value of tradition, folk songs are often requested to be sung over and over by children.

Ackerman (1976) researched the effect of repeated readings of the same story on early language development. His study supports the speculations of others (Fodor 1967; Irwin 1960) regarding the importance of repetition in the language learning process.

In Ackerman's study, hundreds of tape recorded story sessions (mother-child and teacher-students) involving approximately 50 children between the ages of 3-6 years were gathered. Two minute segments from each taped session were transcribed and the verbalizations were analyzed. The study revealed that when a book was familiar to the child, she verbalized more when it was read. This was true for both mothers reading to their child, and teachers reading to their students.

There are many possible advantages to repeated presentations of children's stories. Children appear to more thoroughly enjoy a book the more it is read or sung. In Durkin's(1966) study of early readers she noted that "stories which were read and reread were generally the ones that led to such questions as 'Where does it say that?' and 'What's that word?'" (p. 137). Along these same lines, Ackerman speculates that the child's script-anticipation "more than any other activity in the story time setting is related to the child's early and successful learning to read" (p. 8). All of the categories of child interaction that Ackerman analyzed seemed to be facilitated by increased familiarity with a story's content. In terms of the development of oral interaction and linguistic skills, the repeated story provides the stability and continuity over time and as a consequence, the adult-child dialogue has an opportunity to grow. The adult and child also have a common base of shared information and perspective about the book which naturally generates communication.

Oral Language Activities Using "Stories That Sing"

For all of the reasons mentioned in this manuscript, "Stories That Sing" should stimulate oral language development with young children. One need not consider himself a "good singer" to be involved in these activities with children. The quality of one's voice is not nearly as important as the joy which results from the communication inherent in the activity. The activities which follow serve to assist the reader in putting into operation "Stories That Sing" with youngsters:

A. Sing the story and immediately follow with more language enrichment. Right after singing the story encourage childrens' responses. Ask open ended questions that stimulate creative language, such as: "What if..?" or "How would you feel if..?" or "Would you like to be ..?"

B. After singing, children enjoy examining the details of the song book's illustrations. For example, they love to search for the goose or the fox on every page in, respectively, Go Tell Aunt Rhody (Quackenbush, 1975) and The Fox Went Out on a Chilly Night (Spier, 1961). Putting clear adhesive paper on the covers of your paperback collection helps preserve them. Then the books will always be available for the child who requests to continue singing and talking about the book by himself or with a friend. Personal experience dictates that this is a popular request with four to six year olds. One reason for the popularity of these books, may be that the child feels he can "read" a story that he sings.

C. Allow opportunity for structured language practice by having the children find substitutions for a noun or verb in part of the song. For example, have them fill in"And on this farm he had a _____. EIEIO. With a _____ here and a _____ there ..." or have them think

of "action words" for "A _____ we will go. A _____ we will go" as the children dramatize their action idea (e.g. skipping, swimming, marching). Another type of substitution can give practice with hearing and making rhymes as in finding the second fill-in word of "We'll catch a little (snake) and put him in a _____" when the teacher supplies an easily rhymed first word such as "snake", "kitten", "mule", "rat", "ape", "bear", "bug", or "goat".

D. A correct ordering of events can be taught after singing I Know An Old Lady. Present the children with a feltboard and all the song's characters in felt figures. Have the youngsters talk about the characters' sequence of appearance in the song and how the figures should be ordered on the feltboard.

E. Language experience can be practiced. Seeing songs in words and pictures can inspire some children to make up their own song and want to see it written down. This is a marvelous way for a child to continue discovering the rhythm of language. Lively examples of this type of experience can be found in Crowninshield (1945).

F. Audio-visual activities can be utilized with "Stories That Sing". Most children love to hear their own voices on a tape recorder. Larrick (1975) suggests to parents (teachers could easily be included) that one may...

> turn to one of the old folk songs that has been converted into a picture book (One Wide River to Cross or Old MacDonald Had a Farm) and make your own family recordings with words and music. With the book in front of you and the tape recorder set to record, sing all the verses and the chorus. Then listen and consider how you can vary the production (p. 139).

Sound filmstrips of the song books can also be used in conjunction with poems and story telling which are related in subject matter. This

combination can facilitate relaxed, spontaneous talk about what the literature was about, or other impressions. For example, the subject could be foxes, and in a larger sense traveling, with the teacher using the book The Fox Went Out on a Chilly Night (Spier, 1961) then showing its sound filmstrip, followed by reading poems about foxes and telling the story "The Travels of a Fox" (Arbuthnot, 1971).

G. Dramatize "Stories That Sing" with children. Catch a Little Fox (Fortunata, 1968) adapts well to child-initiated dramatization, especially when there is a "Catch a Little Fox" box in the room that has inside it some butterfly nets and stuffed animals that can be associated easily with appropriate rhymes.

H. There is a wonderful jazz version of The Three Bears which young and old children come to memorize. They greatly enjoy changing their voices to imitate the different sized bears and slapping their knees to the jazz beat. (See appendix A).

I. Pantomiming cooking can be used with "Stories That Sing." On Top of Spaghetti (Glazer, 19) can set the children to boiling spaghetti and rolling meatballs. It is also fun to make pretend spaghetti and meatballs with clay. Over the River and Through the Woods (Child, 1974) can be sung before making individual pumpkin pies.

The verse "(sprinkle) once, (sprinkle) twice, (sprinkle) chicken soup with rice" (with the melody as sung by Carole King) can help the children rhythmically sprinkle, measure, chop or stir the ingredients of chicken soup into a big pot, as they become acquainted with Chicken Soup With Rice (Sendak, 1962). Whatever action the children are performing can be substituted in the song. This is also an excellent technique for having

children describe what they are doing. (It also holds attention during those inevitable times when children must wait for a turn.)

The verse "Run, run, as fast as you can. You can't catch me. I'm the Gingerbread Man" can be sung while reading the story of The Gingerbread Man (Feber, 1958) and while making gingerbread man cookies. The children enjoy making their dough man run while they sing his song.

Additional titles of "Stories That Sing" may be found in appendix B. The authors encourage parents and teachers to use their own creative energies and talents to further develop "Stories That Sing" with children.

The "3" Bears

Once upon a time, in a nursery rhyme,
there were three bears ... three bears...
One was the papa bear and one was the mama
bear and one was a wee bear... a wee bear...

They all went a walking
in the green woods a stalking
when along came a little girl with long
flowing hair. and her name...
was Goldy Locks ...

She knocked upon the door and
no one was there... no one was there
So she walked right in and had herself a ball
She didn't care 'cause
no one was there ... no one was there

Home came these three bears
Home came these three bears

Someone's been eating my. porridge,
said the papa bear, said the papa bear
Someone's been eating my. porridge,
said the mama bear, said the mama bear
Hey bob a ree bear, said the little wee bear,
Someone has broken my chair . ooh.
Someone's been sitting in . my chair,
said the papa bear, said the papa bear
Someone's been sitting in . my chair,
said the mama bear, said the mama bear
Hey bob a ree bear, said the little wee bear,
Someone has broken my chair . ooh.
Someone's been sleeping in . my bed,
said the papa bear, said the papa bear
Someone's been sleeping in . my bed,
said the mama bear, said the mama bear
Hey bob a ree bear, said the little wee bear,
Someone has broken my chair . ooh.

Just then Goldy-locks woke up and broke up
the party and beat it out of bed
Bye, bye, bye, said the papa bear
Bye, bye, bye, said the mama bear
Hey bob a ree bear, said the little wee bear
And so ends the story of the "3" bears

Appendix B

Stories That Sing*

All The Pretty Horses, Susan Jeffers, Scholastic, 1974

Always Room for One More, Sorche NicLeodhas, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965

Billy- Boy, Richard Chase, Golden Gate, 1966

Catch a Little Fox, Beatrice DeRegnier, Seabury Press, 1970

Chicken Soup With Rice, Maurice Sendak, Scholastic, 1962.

The Fox Went Out on a Chilly Night, Peter Spier, Doubleday, 1961

Frog Went-A-Courtin', John Langstaff, Harcourt, 1955

Go Tell Aunt Rhody, Aliki, MacMillan, 1974

Go Tell Aunt Rhody, Robert Quackenbush, Lippincott, 1973

Hush Little Baby, Aliki, Prentice-Hall, 1968

Hush Little Baby, Margot Zemach, E.P. Dutton, 1976

I Know An Old Lady, Rose Bonne, Scholastic, 1961

The Little Drummer Boy, Ezra Jack Keats, MacMillan, 1968

London Bridge is Falling Down, Ed Emberley, Little, Brown, 1967

Oh, A-Hunting We Will Go, John Langstaff, Atheneum, 1974

O'' Dan Tucker, John Langstaff, Harcourt, 1963

Old MacDonald Had a Farm, Abner Graboff, Scholastic, 1969

One Wide River To Cross, Barbara and Ed Emberley, Prentice-Hall, 1966

Over in the Meadow, Ezra Jack Keats, Scholastic, 1971

Over in the Meadow, John Langstaff, Harcourt, 1957

Simon's Song, Barbara and Ed Emberley, Prentice-Hall, 1969.

The Swapping Boy, John Langstaff, Harcourt, 1960

Yankee Doodle, Richard Schackburg, Prentice-Hall, 1965

*Folk songs which have been illustrated and put into book form.

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